

INTRODUCTION

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The practice of theory is informed by struggle. Racial capitalism as a framework of socio-historical analysis emerged in the context of the struggles of the African diaspora and the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement, most specifically amongst the confrontation between Black Radical socialism and white supremacist capitalism. The appearance of racial capitalism was necessary to better inform our comprehension of the structures of exploitation that were sought to be overthrown. It came to be understood that the systems of Jim Crow and Apartheid in the citadels of White power, the United States and South Africa respectively, could not be understood as institutions of racial segregation on their own terms. That is, that racial supremacy sought to reproduce itself for its own sake. Nor could the struggle seek to follow traditional strategies of revolution generated by theories that conceptualised race and class as separate social phenomena, or capitalism as extricable from colonialism and slavery. What was required, rather, were new models of understanding and theories of history that could be wielded by those engaged in the struggle against a racial social order, harnessed by structures of social exploitation that sought to harvest the fruits of the lands and labour of the oppressed for the benefit of white ruling class power. This is the legacy of racial capitalism as it was understood by the intellectual architects of the Black Radical Tradition. It is upon this basis that this special issue seeks to build in comprehending the structure of Zionist colonialism and the needs of the Palestinian struggle for decolonisation.

In view of the most destructive violence against Palestinians since the 1948 Nakba, and the continuing reinforcement of Zionist settler colonialism by Western power, new contexts demand new methods for comprehending the Palestinian struggle. Palestine cannot be understood through sociological or political theories that eschew the currency of race in the disciplining Palestinians as inhuman objects of destruction. Nor can we accept theories that understand Palestine through the paradigm of



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a bi-national ‘conflict’ outside the dictates of a world capitalist system organised by Imperialism and buttressed by the organised violence of settler colonialism. For us racial capitalism illuminates the nature of the monster and provides the theoretical and methodological tools to wage the struggle as is now required in the face of the unrelenting barbarism of Zionist colonialism and Western Imperialism. *The Lancet* estimated in July 2024 that the number of deaths from the current genocidal assault on Gaza could be 186,000 (Khatib et al 2024); Susan Abulhawa’s estimate is even higher, at 194,768–511,824 deaths in Gaza (Abulhawa 2024). As Frantz Fanon declared during the Algerian Revolution: ‘for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new way of being’ (Ndayisenga 2024).

Building on the seminal theorisations of racial capitalism by Cedric Robinson, this collection seeks to both employ racial capitalism in theorising the Zionist colonisation of Palestine and to pinpoint Palestine as centrally relevant to the generation of global analyses of racial capitalism. In making sense of the constitutive elements and the social relations which reproduce the local and global structure of racial capitalism, **Kieron Turner** sets out our understanding of the links between racial capitalism and settler colonialism, reconstructs our analysis of Palestine through the framework of racial capitalism and the South African Anti-Apartheid struggle, opening space for understanding Palestine as a site of struggle in which to reconstruct the theoretical and methodological understandings of race, capitalism, settler colonialism, Imperialism and strategies of liberation.

Offering another theoretical overview, **Sai Englert and Gargi Bhattacharyya** discuss some uncertainties in recent analytic discussions of settler colonialism and racial capitalism and explore the need to understand both as co-constitutive elements of the global order with Palestine at its centre.

Providing a historical context, **Nahla Abdo** exploring the development of capitalism in Palestine under British colonialism and the Zionist settler colonial project, argues that through policies and practices that sought to reproduce the logics of race and capital, the British colonial state was crucial in enabling the Zionist project to materialise in Palestine.

A further focus on colonial racial capitalism, imperialism, and racism by **Muhannad Ayyash** provides the global and imperial connections. Ayyash argues that Israel’s brutal violences of land theft, colonial extermination and the erasure of Palestinian political existence are the grounds for both Israeli and American Imperialist capital accumulation, and the concealment of the Israeli erasure of Palestine in international discourse and policy.

Ronit Lentin theorises Zionism as what Robinson calls a racial regime, and as a project of white European Jewish supremacy, outlining

the workings of racial capitalism in relation to land, labour and Israel's incarceration regime.

Johnny Eric Williams and **David Embrick** link apartheid and racial capitalism with reference to South Africa and Palestine, contending that regarding apartheid as a crime against humanity lacks an economic and ontological link and does not provide for critiquing the economic aspects of a settler colonial state embedded apartheid in Palestine.

Finally, **Greg Burris** argues that Robinson's theorisation of the Black Radical Tradition is not just a supplement to his theorisation of racial capitalism, showing how Robinson's ideas can contribute to our understanding of Palestinian resistance and liberation, paving a path out of the Zionist circle.

References

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